VIRGINIA GAY HOSPITAL

TREE OF *Lights*



Take part in local tradition

1923-2026



VIRGINIA WALCUTT GAY

It began with a gift.

Virginia Walcutt Gay gifted $50,000 to the City of Vinton in the early 1900s with the wish of establishing a community hospital. She gave back to a community she loved and cherished in honor of the health and well-being of the individuals living there. That gift was the beginning of Virginia Gay Hospital and a tradition of quality healthcare in Benton County.

TREE OF *Lights*

Lighting the Way Together

For more than three decades, the Virginia Gay Foundation Tree of Lights has been a beautiful tradition of generosity, remembrance, and hope.

Each light represents something special, a life touched, a loved one remembered, a caregiver appreciated, or a community coming together to make a difference. What began as a simple holiday tradition has grown into an important source of support for Virginia Gay Hospital, Nursing & Rehab, and the patients, residents, and families we serve.

This year, we celebrate the people who make Virginia Gay special. We celebrate dedicated employees who care for others every day, physicians and providers who serve our community, volunteers who give their time, and donors whose generosity help make new equipment, technology, programs, and compassionate care possible.

Together, we are helping ensure that quality care remains close to home.

As you enjoy the 2026 Tree of Lights, we invite you to celebrate the many people and stories that make Virginia Gay more than a hospital, it is a community of caring.

Thank you for being part of the Virginia Gay tradition of giving and healing.

• *Together, We Make a Difference.*

VGH FOUNDATION LEGACY AWARD HONOREE

Michele Burnes, PA-C



Michele Burnes' journey into healthcare began as a critical care nurse at St. Luke's Hospital, where she worked alongside surgeons, pulmonologists, and family practice physicians. It was there that a surgeon encouraged her to consider advancing her education. He shared that his sister was a physician assistant and told Michele that she had the skills and determination to follow a similar path. His words planted a seed that grew into a life-changing decision.

Intrigued, Michele began researching PA programs and discovered the University of North Dakota's innovative curriculum, one of the earliest mid-level provider programs in the nation, created after the Vietnam War. At that time, the program accepted only nurses and was specifically designed to prepare providers to serve in rural communities where the need was greatest. Inspired by that mission, Michele began asking colleagues which family practice physician within a 30–40-mile radius they most respected for rural care. The answer was unanimous: Dr. Brian Meeker in Vinton.

Michele reached out to Dr. Meeker, shared her goal of becoming a PA, and asked if he would consider mentoring her. To her good fortune, he agreed. Though her first application to PA school was not accepted, Michele used the setback as motivation to strengthen her preparation. She left her administrative role as a nurse manager in cardiology to return to bedside care, working alongside one of her mentors, Laurie Frier, PA-C. With Laurie's guidance and Dr. Meeker's support, Michele gained the confidence and knowledge she needed to try again, this time successfully.

After graduation, Michele began her PA career with the University of Iowa's outreach program in Marengo. A few years later, Dr. Meeker called with an opportunity to help establish a new clinic in Urbana. Michele accepted, and together with her colleagues, began building the Urbana Family Medical Clinic from the ground up. "I still remember starting with no patients on day one, then seeing two patients on day two," she recalls. "From there, we grew steadily over the years."

Nearly 25 years later, Michele and her partner, Pam Keel, ARNP, now care for 40–60 patients a day. She has had the privilege of caring for multiple generations of families, supporting them through both joyous milestones and difficult challenges. One memory that stands out is when her first three prenatal patients each delivered baby girls in the same month, and all three named them Emma. Today, Michele still cares for those young women, now in their twenties.

For Michele, the heart of her work has always been compassion and access to quality care. "Healthcare has changed over the years, but what has never changed is the need for compassion," she says. At the Urbana Family Medical Clinic, we pride ourselves on making sure our patients feel cared for as people, not just as cases."

"Healthcare has changed over the years, but what has never changed is the need for compassion"

Michele credits much of her success to the extraordinary colleagues she has worked with for more than two decades—the front office team, the nursing staff, and everyone who supports the clinic's mission. She also expresses deep gratitude to Virginia Gay Hospital and to Dr. Meeker for believing in her and shaping her career.

"Virginia Gay has not only given me the opportunity to grow as a practitioner but also as a person," Michele reflects. "I am truly blessed for the trust and support the community has given me all these years."

For her dedication to rural healthcare, her compassion for generations of families, and her unwavering commitment to serving her community, the Virginia Gay Hospital Foundation proudly recognizes Michele Burnes, PA-C, as a 2025 Legacy Award Honoree.



MICHELE BURNES & THE URBANA CLINIC STAFF



CELEBRATING 22 YEARS OF CARING
FOR THE VINTON COMMUNITY

Michelle Elgin, DO

This year marks 22 years since Dr. Michelle Elgin joined Virginia Gay Hospital, a decision she continues to be grateful for. Growing up in a small western Iowa town of about 1,500 people, Dr. Elgin dreamed of practicing medicine in a rural community where she could build lasting relationships with her patients and become part of the community she served. Her inspiration began in high school, when she followed her hometown physician and discovered her calling to rural family medicine.

As a college student at Wartburg College, Dr. Elgin was accepted into Project FaME, a rural medicine program through Des Moines University designed to encourage students to pursue careers in rural Iowa. The program gave her early exposure to rural medicine, including opportunities to work alongside physicians in small communities. During one of those experiences, she spent two weeks following Dr. Meeker at Virginia Gay. At the time, she could not have known that eight years later she would return to VGH to begin her career.

After Wartburg, Dr. Elgin attended Des Moines University for medical school, completed her internship in Kansas, and then returned to Iowa for her rural family medicine residency in Mason City, where she served as chief resident during her final year. As graduation approached, she knew she wanted to find a small-town hospital where she could practice full-spectrum family medicine, and Virginia Gay was the perfect fit.

During her first years at VGH, Dr. Elgin experienced a deeply personal chapter that reinforced the importance of a supportive healthcare community. Her only child was born with a brain malformation and developed cerebral palsy. As her family navigated the challenges of raising a medically complex child, Virginia Gay stood beside her. When Dr. Elgin asked to transition to part-time work, hospital leadership worked with her to create a balance that allowed her to continue caring for her patients while being there for her son. She remains deeply grateful for the support she and her family received from VGH and the community.

Today, Dr. Elgin continues to find great fulfillment in the intellectual challenge and variety of family medicine. Working in both the clinic and hospital allows her to care for patients across a broad spectrum of needs, from preventive care to complex medical conditions. One of the most rewarding aspects of her career has been caring for multiple generations of the same families and watching those relationships grow over the years.

Dr. Elgin is known for her compassionate bedside manner and her willingness to listen. She believes that sometimes what patients need most is a kind and understanding ear, along with a physician who will help them navigate difficult or complicated medical circumstances.

After more than two decades, Dr. Elgin remains thankful for the opportunity to practice medicine at Virginia Gay and to call Vinton home. Her journey reflects the special connection that can exist between a rural physician, her patients, and the community she serves, a connection built over years of trust, compassion, and caring.

Virginia Gay Hospital is proud to celebrate Dr. Elgin's 22 years of dedicated service and the many lives she has touched throughout her career.



VGH BOARD – LEGACY AWARD HONOREE

John Yundt

John Yundt's connection to Virginia Gay Hospital spans more than three decades and reflects a deep commitment to the strength, independence, and future of healthcare in the community. John began serving with the Virginia Gay Foundation in 1992 and joined the Virginia Gay Hospital Board in 2001. He later served as Board President from January 2019 through October 2021, following in the footsteps of his father, Chuck Yundt.

Throughout his years of service, John witnessed, and helped guide, an extraordinary period of growth at Virginia Gay. From the purchase and expansion of local family medical clinics to major hospital renovations, new surgical suites, and the addition of more than 20,000 square feet to the hospital, John was part of many important decisions that strengthened VGH and expanded healthcare services throughout the area. The growth continued with the addition and expansion of clinics in Atkins, Urbana, Van Horne, and Vinton.

John's appreciation for Virginia Gay comes down to its people. He speaks with admiration about the dedication, compassion, skill, and camaraderie of VGH's staff, providers, and leadership. He has valued the openness of those around the board table and believes that being willing to listen, remain open-minded, and allow everyone to express their opinions is essential to good leadership.

One of the things John is especially proud of is Virginia Gay's ability to remain an independent hospital while building strong relationships and partnerships that benefit patients, providers, and staff. He has seen firsthand how collaboration, shared services, technology, and thoughtful financial decisions can help a rural hospital continue to provide a broad range of quality services close to home.

For John, Virginia Gay feels like family. He and his wife have personally experienced the care provided by VGH, including orthopedic services, and those experiences have reinforced his belief in the importance of having skilled healthcare professionals and convenient access to care in the community.

Looking back on his years of service, John hopes his legacy is one of optimism, positive relationships, and perseverance, even during adversity. He believes the future of Virginia Gay depends on continuing to adapt, build relationships, embrace change, and remain committed to serving the community.

John's decades of service represent more than a list of accomplishments. They represent a lasting investment in Virginia Gay Hospital, its people, and the generations of families who depend on Quality Care Close to Home.



2026 VGH LEGACY AWARD RECIPIENT

Angela Wacha

For 34 years, Angela has been more than a Certified Nursing Assistant at Virginia Gay Nursing & Rehab, she has been a trusted presence, compassionate caregiver, mentor, and friend to generations of residents and coworkers.

Angela's journey at Virginia Gay began in the kitchen, where she spent her first year before discovering her calling in resident care. With encouragement from Bev Riege, VGH supported Angela in earning her CNA certification through Kirkwood Community College. She credits Leann Sauer, an early mentor and guide, with helping shape the caregiver she would become.

From the beginning, Angela understood that caring for someone is about much more than completing a checklist. Helping residents with the activities of daily living—dressing, bathing, grooming, eating, toileting, and transferring, is important, but Angela believes the greatest gift is helping someone maintain a good quality of life while preserving their dignity, independence, and sense of worth.

"Being there for people and taking the time to listen can make a difference," is at the heart of Angela's philosophy. She especially values being present for residents when family members cannot be there. A conversation, a visit, or simply sitting beside someone can mean so much.

Angela has also been a champion of teamwork. She believes strong communication, leading by example, and making everyone feel like part of the team create an environment where both residents and caregivers can thrive. When a new resident arrives, Angela makes a point of helping them feel welcome, introducing herself, visiting, listening, and helping them become comfortable in their new surroundings.

Her commitment to others extends beyond her work at VGH. For approximately 10 years, Angela has volunteered with the VGH school supplies program, helping provide the necessary school supplies to an estimated 700 VGH staff children over a 10-year period. She also gives her time weekly to Showers of Blessings and regularly supports community food drives. Her service reflects the same belief that guides her work at VGH: small acts of kindness can make a lasting difference.

Throughout her career, Angela has witnessed challenges that tested the strength of the VGH family. During a devastating flood, employees walked to work and cared for residents despite losing power for several days. The community rallied around the facility, while VGH staff demonstrated remarkable resilience and teamwork.

During COVID-19, Angela saw another opportunity to make a difference. When residents were restricted to their rooms and separated from many of the people they loved, she spent extra time visiting and providing companionship. She created crossword and word-search books to give residents something meaningful to do and looked for the little things that could brighten their days.

After 34 years, Angela's motivation remains remarkably simple: make a difference in someone's life.

She believes an exceptional CNA brings compassion, integrity, patience, dignity, and respect to every interaction. And for those beginning a career in long-term care, her advice is heartfelt: you have to like what you do, because every day your work affects the quality of life of another person.

Angela has become a person coworkers can rely on, a "go-to" person who brings confidence, compassion, and a willingness to help. Her legacy is found not only in the many residents she has cared for, but also in the coworkers she has encouraged, the new employees she has mentored, and the community she continues to serve.

For more than three decades, Angela Wacha has lived out what it means to provide quality, compassionate care close to home. Her legacy is one of dignity, service, teamwork, and, above all, making a difference.

Virginia Gay is grateful for Angela's 34 years of dedicated service and for the countless lives she has touched along the way.

giving options

TOGETHER, WE MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

Each year, gifts to the Tree of Lights bring vital equipment, comfort, and resources to Virginia Gay Hospital and Clinics. These items directly enhance patient care, support our staff, and improve community health. Your generosity truly lights the way.

- LARGE ANGEL $500
- SMALL ANGEL $250
- ORNAMENTS $200
- CANDY CANES $100
- STRING OF LIGHTS $50
- GOLD LIGHT $25
- GREEN LIGHT $20
- BLUE LIGHT $15
- RED LIGHT $10
- WHITE LIGHT $5

SCAN THE CODE FOR ONLINE CONTRIBUTIONS

Scan the code to access online giving or use the form enclosed to return donations by mail or drop-off (see form for details).

"Giving is not just about making a donation. It is about making a difference." — KATHY CALVIN



NURSING & REHAB

EZ Way 500lb. Smart Stand - 2 each

The EZ Way 500-lb. Smart Stand provides safe, supportive assistance for patients who can participate in standing but need help with balance and mobility. It can assist caregivers with transfers between beds, chairs, and other surfaces while reducing the physical strain associated with patient handling.

EZ Way 500lb. Effort Lift with Scale

The EZ Way 500-lb. Effort Lift with Scale provides safe, dependable support for transferring patients who require more assistance with mobility. The integrated scale allows caregivers to obtain an accurate patient weight during the transfer process, helping support appropriate clinical monitoring without requiring a separate weighing procedure.



Traversa Transport Wheelchair

The Travesa Transport Chair will provide a safe, comfortable, and dependable way to move patients throughout Virginia Gay Hospital. Its design supports easier patient transportation between departments while helping staff provide safe transfers and maintain patient dignity.



WOMEN'S HEALTH

Colposcope

A mobile colposcope will help our providers take a closer look when a woman's cervical screening results need further evaluation. With enhanced magnification and visualization, this equipment can help identify changes that may need additional testing or treatment, supporting early detection of cervical cancer and other conditions. Bringing this technology to Virginia Gay Hospital means women in our community can receive important follow-up care closer to home, with greater convenience and peace of mind

IMAGING



Trophan Machine for Ultrasound

The Nanosonics trophon ultrasound probe disinfection system provides high-level disinfection of ultrasound probes between patients, helping protect patients from the risk of cross-contamination.

Handicap Badge Access for MRI Door

A new Lenel badge-access system for the MRI handicap entrance will improve secure, convenient access for patients, staff, and visitors. The system will allow authorized individuals to enter through the accessible entrance while maintaining appropriate security around the MRI area. This investment will make the patient experience safer.

ACUTE/OUTPATIENT SERVICES/ER



TE Flex Ultrasound System

The TE Flex Ultrasound System provides high-quality imaging that can help providers evaluate a wide range of conditions, including problems involving the abdomen, thyroid, blood vessels, muscles, tendons, and soft tissues. Ultrasound can help identify conditions such as gallstones, kidney or bladder concerns, thyroid nodules, blood-flow abnormalities, cysts, and soft-tissue injuries, while providing real-time images without radiation.



Stryker Transport Chairs - 3

Stryker transport chairs provides safe, durable, and comfortable transportation for patients throughout Virginia Gay Hospital. Designed for healthcare environments, these chairs make it easier for staff to safely move patients between departments while supporting patient comfort and dignity.



EZ Way Standard Effort Hoyer Lift

The EZ Way Standard Effort Hoyer Lift provides safe, reliable assistance when transferring patients who need additional support moving between a bed, chair, wheelchair, or other surfaces. This equipment helps reduce the risk of injury for both patients and caregivers while promoting safe, dignified transfers.



What You Can Do at Virginia Gay Hospital

QUICK ACCESS TO CARE • APPOINTMENTS AVAILABLE

Behavioral Health
- Vinton

Emergency Department
- 24/7 Emergency Care

Family Medicine & Primary Care
- Atkins
- Urbana
- Van Horne
- Vinton

Home Health
- Community Health
- Home Care Aides
- Private Pay Services
- Rehab Therapy
- Skilled Nursing

Imaging
- Bone Densitometry
- CT
- Mammography
- MRI
- Ultrasound
- X-Ray

Labs
- Blood Draws
- Drug Screening
- Tissue Pathology

Nutrition Services
- Diabetic Education & Prevention
- Eating Disorder Guidance
- Nutrition Therapy & Counseling
- Obesity & Weight Management

Outreach Specialties
- Cardiology
- Dermatology
- ENT
- General Surgery
- Hematology/Oncology
- Infusion/Injection
- Nephrology
- OB/Gyn
- Orthopedics
- Pain Management
- Podiatry
- Pulmonology
- Urology
- Wound Clinic

Respiratory Therapy
- EKG
- Pulmonary Function Testing
- Stress Testing

Skilled Nursing & Therapy
- Occupational
- Physical
- Speech & Language

Sleep Studies
- Home Sleep Study
- Overnight Sleep Study

Surgery
- Endoscopy
- ENT
- General Surgery
- Orthopedic
- Podiatry
- Urology

VG Nursing & Rehab
- Long Term Care Facility

VIRGINIA GAY HOSPITAL

myvgh.org
319-472-6200
502 N. 9th Ave Vinton, IA 52349

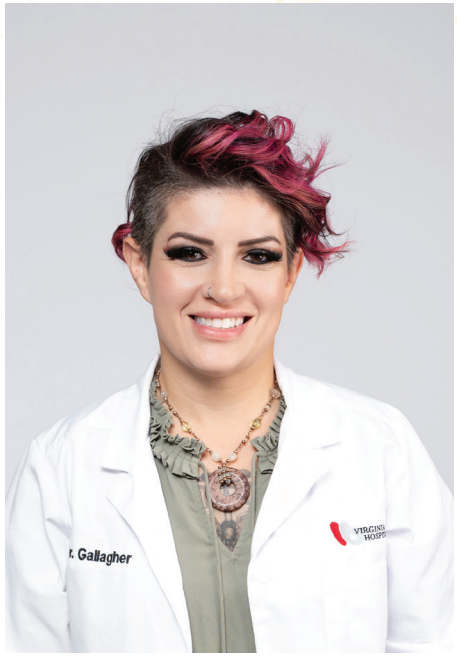
Atkins Clinic • Urbana Clinic
Van Horne Clinic • Vinton Clinic



Dr. Scott Besong, MD

FAMILY MEDICINE PHYSICIAN

Virginia Gay Hospital is pleased to welcome Dr. Scott Besong, MD, to the VGH medical team. Dr. Besong brings a strong background in family medicine, with training in preventive care, chronic disease management, acute care and patient education. His healthcare experience began as a Certified Nursing Assistant, an experience that helped shape his commitment to listening to patients, showing compassion and treating every person with dignity. Dr. Besong is excited to build lasting relationships with patients and families while providing quality care close to home.



Dr. Mariam Gallagher, D.O., MPH

FAMILY MEDICINE PHYSICIAN

Virginia Gay Hospital is pleased to welcome Dr. Mariam Gallagher, D.O., MPH, to our medical staff. A board-certified Family Medicine physician, Dr. Gallagher brings extensive experience in family medicine, primary care, hospital medicine, military healthcare, telehealth and medical education. She is passionate about caring for the whole person and helping individuals and families achieve their lifelong health goals through preventive care, wellness and strong patient relationships. Dr. Gallagher is committed to serving the area and helping strengthen the well-being of the community through compassionate, quality care.



Anna Selk

FOUNDATION BOARD MEMBER

Anna joins the Board with a deep connection to VGH and a strong commitment to the communities it serves. As Associate Superintendent of the Benton Community School District, she brings more than a decade of leadership experience in strategic planning, fiscal management, policy, communication and community relations. Anna is also a small business owner and has served on the Keystone City Council, Benton County Community Foundation Board and currently the Grant Wood AEA Board of Directors. As both a longtime patient and the daughter of a former VGH employee, Anna understands the importance of ensuring healthcare remains close to home.



Alicia Rausch

FOUNDATION BOARD MEMBER

Alicia brings a strong background in finance, business operations and community involvement to the VGH Foundation Board. She spent more than a decade in corporate finance, supporting financial reporting, forecasting and planning before joining her husband in supporting the operations of Rausch Financial Services. Alicia also has experience working with local students as a substitute teacher at Benton Community schools. A Van Horne resident and mother of three, Alicia is passionate about supporting the community and is excited to help advance the Foundation's mission of strengthening healthcare for local families.



Rob Levis

VGH BOARD MEMBER

Rob brings a wealth of financial, leadership and community experience to the Virginia Gay Hospital Board of Directors. He currently serves as Vice President and Chief Financial Officer at Cornell College and previously spent 17 years with AmeriCorps NCCC in Vinton, including serving as Deputy Director and Region Director. Rob also brings 21 years of military leadership experience as an Army officer, along with extensive involvement in the Vinton community through organizations including the Lions Club, Knights of Columbus, American Legion and Boy Scouts. A longtime Vinton resident, Rob is honored to serve VGH and help support its commitment to quality healthcare close to home.

2026 tree walk

VIRGINIA GAY HOSPITAL FOUNDATION

Established in 1915 Farmers Savings Bank & Trust

Mark your calendars for a beloved tradition

FIVE DAYS TO VISIT! Bid on your favorite holiday items and take home a special holiday treasure, all while supporting a cause that enhances healthcare services right here in our community.

NOV 7
8AM - Noon

open house
NOV 12
5PM - 7:30pM

NOV 14
8AM - Noon

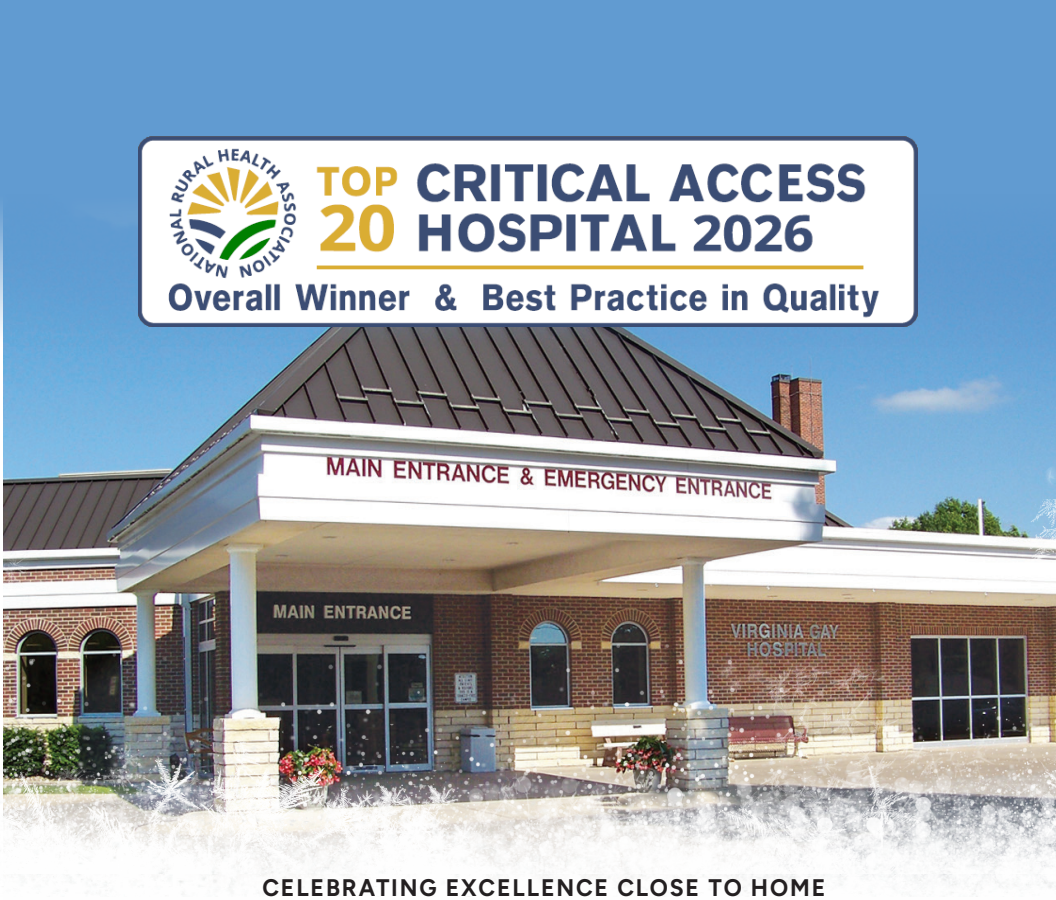
NOV 19
5PM - 7PM

final day to bid
NOV 21
8AM - 11AM

ADOPT A SNOWMAN

Take home a one of a kind, handmade snowman complete with birth certificate and personality bio. Adopt yours for $15!





CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE CLOSE TO HOME

Virginia Gay Hospital Named a Chartis Top 20 Critical Access Hospital in the Nation

We are proud to celebrate this incredible recognition of Virginia Gay Hospital as a 2026 Chartis Top 20 Critical Access Hospital, an honor that reflects the dedication, teamwork and compassion of our entire VGH family.

From clinical care, providers, nursing staff to respiratory therapy, imaging, social services, therapy services, behavioral health, home health, housekeeping, food and nutrition, laboratory, maintenance, business services, administration and every department in between, our more than 300 associates work together each day to provide Quality Care Close to Home.

This award belongs to the people who make VGH special, and to the community that has supported us for more than a century.

Thank you for helping us continue the Tradition of Giving.